



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Across America

Pasture Planting

Job Sheet – 512

King Ranch (‘KR’) Bluestem



Texas A&M Grass Images, Bioinformatics
Working Group

Description King Ranch bluestem is an introduced warm season perennial semi-sod forming grass. It tends to spread by seed, tillers, and occasionally stolons or rhizomes. It produces seed throughout the growing season. ‘KR’ has been widely used for erosion control in Central Texas, where it persists along roadsides and in over grazed pastures. King Ranch bluestem does not start rapid growth until summer, but grows later into the fall than bermudagrass. It is not as productive as other Old World Bluestems, but will provide a moderate amount of forage with low inputs when not over grazed. It will persist when over grazed, but productivity is poor. ‘KR’ is most palatable in rotational grazing situations.

Adaptation Best adapted to loamy to clayey soils with 20 inches or more annual precipitation throughout Texas, with the exception of the East Texas Timberlands. It is drought resistant and cold tolerant.

Planting Dates Optimum planting dates are from mid-February to mid-April.

Seeding Rate For drilled or broadcast planting the rate is 1.8 pounds PLS per acre.

Planting Depth 0 to ¾ inch deep

Seedbed Preparation Disk 3-4 inches deep, allow to firm from rain or roll before or during planting. A clean weed free seedbed is essential to good establishment.

Lime and Fertilizer The pH range for KR is 5.5 to 7.5. ‘KR’ will survive with little or no fertility when managed as a range grass. If

managed for pasture or hay, nitrogen (N) application should be split with about 25 to 40 Lb/Ac N being applied in late spring and after each graze down or hay harvest except the last, depending on the level of management, and site conditions. Phosphorous (P), potassium (K), and other nutrients should be applied as needed according to soil test. If P, K, or other nutrients are needed at the time of establishment, incorporate them during seedbed preparation.

Planting Method ‘KR’ can be no-tilled into existing cover after burndown, or conventionally planted into a prepared seedbed using a grass drill with depth bands for proper depth control, and seed boxes with agitators to keep seed mixed and prevent fluffy seed from lodging in the box. It is very difficult to broadcast the fluffy seed of the bluestems. If conventionally drilled or broadcast lightly roll after planting to firm the seedbed and press seed into the soil. Mow to control weeds until well established.

Management Allow the stand to become firmly rooted before grazing. Newly established stands should not be cut or grazed closer than 6 inches. Once established, ‘KR’ should not be grazed until grass is 8 inches tall, and it can be grazed to 4 inches if in a rotational system, or grazed to 6 inches if in a continuous grazing situation. ‘KR’ should be grazed on a 40-45 day cycle. It may be cut to a 4 inch height when used for hay. Hay should be cut before seedheads are out of boot.

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Sources: TAES, TAEX, NRCS Technical Guide, and Douglass W. King Seed Co.

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